

(b) whether the shares are issued to the employees; and

(c) whether there is any move to increase the share from 5 per cent to 10 per cent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The Question does not indicate the name of the company to which it pertains. Based on references to Sterlite and to Rs. 49/- being the share money at the time of disinvestment, it is assumed that the Question relates to the strategic sale of Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) to M/s Sterlite Industries (India) Limited, the Strategic Partner. In terms of the Shareholders Agreement signed between the Government and M/s Sterlite Industries (India) Limited, on 2nd March, 2001 the Government shall at its sole discretion, have the option of selling from its shares not more than 5% of the equity share capital existing as on date of the Agreement, to the employees of BALCO. Government has not taken any decision in this regard.

(b) and (c) In view of reply to part (a) above, do not arise.

License to micro financial institutions

†2958. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that licenses have been issued to private bankers in the name of micro financial institutes for providing loans in agricultural sector;

(b) if so, the total interest charged by them for providing loans in agricultural sector;

(c) the total licenses issued by Reserve Bank of India and commercial banks till date;

(d) whether any policy was announced regarding issuance of such licenses; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) to (e) As per the extant Branch Authorisation Policy of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), banks are required to submit an Annual Branch Expansion Plan to the RBI for their approval. Banks are free to open branches at the location of their choice, keeping in view the viability, availability of infrastructure, law and order situation and potential for business of the centre. However, banks are encouraged to open branches in under banked districts and rural centres. Once the RBI receives the Annual Branch Expansion Plan of the bank, it is discussed with the Management of the respective bank in a meeting, which is normally held within a month of the receipt of the Plan. Authorisations are issued thereafter keeping in view the criteria laid down in the Branch Authorisation Policy. Reserve Bank of India has granted authorisations to Nationalised Banks for opening of 594 branches during the period April, 2005 and March, 2006.

Agricultural loans given by commercial banks

†2959. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total agricultural loans provided by the scheduled commercial banks during the last three years;

(b) the target fixed for the same and target achieved in this regard; and

(c) the total percentage of NPA in agricultural sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) The total amount of agriculture credit disbursed by commercial banks, both Public and Private Sector, *vis-a-vis* their targets during the last three years is given in the following table:

Agency	(Rs. in Crore)					
	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06*	
	Target	Ach.	Target	Ach.	Target	Ach.
Public Sector	42,575.68	42,210.77	57,000	65,217.72	87,200	91,234.34
Commercial Banks						
Private Sector Banks	Not prescribed	10,230.08		16,263.42		25,212.75
TOTAL:		52,440.85	57,000	81,481.14	87,200	116,447.09
*Provisional						

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.